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SUBJECT: LIEBERMAN ENGAGES INDIA ON CLIMATE CHANGE

¶1. (SBU) Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Senator Joseph Lieberman met on August 10 in New Delhi with Dr. Leena Srivastava, Deputy Director, Ambassador Chandrashekher Dasgupta, Distinguished Fellow, Dr. Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, and other senior staff of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), an international energy and environment research organization headquartered in New Delhi, to exchange views on global climate change issues and the outlook for joint U.S.-Indian cooperation in clean energy technology to reduce carbon emissions. The discussions were cordial and productive, and covered a number of pertinent topics of interest to the two countries, including: the political backdrop to climate change initiatives in the U.S. and India, an overview of India's specific climate change challenges and its energy policy relative to those, and the desirability of U.S.-India cooperation on carbon emission reduction. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Senator Lieberman opened by affirming that climate change is a real concern and priority on his agenda. He voiced his conviction that the U.S. should take responsibility for reducing carbon emissions, and expressed his desire for joint U.S.-India cooperation in sharing clean energy technology. Ambassador Dasgupta responded that there is tremendous scope for Indo-U.S. climate change cooperation, and cited the major contribution that the U.S.-India civilian nuclear agreement would make to climate change mitigation. He asked the Senator what contributions the U.S. would be willing to make in a post-Kyoto agreement. Senator Lieberman stated that there is now both scientific and popular consensus on the reality of climate change, as well as widespread recognition in the U.S. that it is both an environmental and national security issue. He related that there is a growing bipartisan consensus on the need for carbon emission caps, and that Congress is seeking to pass new climate change legislation addressing this requirement.

¶3. (SBU) The discussion then turned to India's climate change issues and its response to them. Dr. Ghosh described growing indications of climate change impacts on India such as receding Himalayan glaciers and extreme weather events. He noted India's increasing vulnerability to weather-induced calamities, and that India is now spending an amount equivalent to over two percent of its GDP on disaster response. He stated that notwithstanding a lot of finger pointing over India's growing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, India is responsible and proactive regarding GHG emission reduction. He cited active programs in renewable energy and energy conservation, as well as other initiatives.

(NOTE: Dr. Ghosh recently retired as the Government of India's (GOI) Secretary of Environment and Forests, in which capacity he served as the GOI's chief climate change negotiator. END NOTE)

¶4. (SBU) Dr. Kalipada Chatterjee, Senior Climate Change

Advisor, Winrock International India, noted that developing countries, needs with respect to climate change impacts are different from those of the industrialized world. He stated that India should focus more on adaptation than mitigation, and adopt strategies that address poverty eradication and promote sustainable development. He acknowledged that technology transfer is important, but that India needs to improve its technological base in order to adopt new technologies, and that India needs assistance in this regard.

Pradeep Dadhich, TERI Fellow, highlighted India's heavy dependence on coal, and the need to adopt clean, coal-powered generation technologies such as supercritical boilers and integrated coal gasification combined cycle (IGCC). He acknowledged strong U.S. expertise in these technologies and stated that the U.S. could facilitate the transfer of such technologies to India.

15. (SBU) In response to a question from Senator Lieberman regarding the state of public opinion in India regarding climate change, Dr. Srivastava responded that while there is a very rapid change in consciousness, it has not yet become a significant political issue. Dr. Ghosh added that the large number of questions in parliament on climate change indicates strong interest, but thus far in the political arena climate change is mainly employed as a stick (by the opposition) with which to beat the Government.

16. (U) This cable was cleared by Senator Lieberman.

17. (U) USG participants:

- Senator Joseph Lieberman, Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
- Vance Serchuk, Foreign Policy Aide
- Fred Downey, Defense Policy Aide
- Captain Steve Vahsen, USN

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- George Deikun, USAID/India Mission Director
- Satish Kulkarni, Science Counselor, U.S. Embassy
- Douglas Johnston, Political, U.S. Embassy
- Priya Ghose, Science FSN, U.S. Embassy
- Glenn Whaley, USAID/India (note taker)

The Energy and Resources Institute:

- Dr. Leena Srivastava, Deputy Director, TERI
- Ambassador Chandrashekher Dasgupta, Distinguished Fellow, TERI
- Dr. Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, TERI
- Sanjay Vashisht, Fellow, TERI
- Dr. Ritu Mathur, Fellow, TERI
- Dr. Pradeep Dadhich, Fellow, TERI

Winrock International India:

- Dr. Kalipada Chatterjee, Senior Climate Change Advisor, WII

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